

A Model for Responding to UK and International Law Students' Great(er) Expectations in Wales' Internationalised Learning Environment

Clear, Stephen; Parker, Marie

The Journal of Commonwealth Law and Legal Education

Published: 08/07/2019

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Cyswllt i'r cyhoeddiad / Link to publication](#)

Dyfyniad o'r fersiwn a gyhoeddwyd / Citation for published version (APA):

Clear, S., & Parker, M. (2019). A Model for Responding to UK and International Law Students' Great(er) Expectations in Wales' Internationalised Learning Environment. *The Journal of Commonwealth Law and Legal Education*, 13(1).

Hawliau Cyffredinol / General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal ?

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

A MODEL FOR RESPONDING TO UK AND INTERNATIONAL LAW STUDENTS' GREAT(ER) EXPECTATIONS IN WALES' INTERNATIONALISED LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Stephen Clear, Lecturer in Constitutional Law and Administrative Law and Legal Skills and Senior Tutor at Bangor Law School, Bangor University, North Wales, UK.

Marie Parker, Lecturer in Family and Welfare Law, and Director of Teaching and Learning at Bangor Law School, Bangor University, North Wales, UK.

Whilst previous studies have sought to understand UK Law student expectations, to date, none have explored such within the context of an internationalised legal education environment; nor how international student expectations compare to UK native learners.¹ This study, which collates findings as to student expectations from 2013-2017, as well as how these changed throughout the year, finds that the majority of UK students focused on their career aspirations and employability. Meanwhile the expectations held by most international students focused on their desire to develop academic knowledge from other jurisdictions, and in some cases to improve language skills. The challenge facing facilitators was how to promote internationalisation, whilst reflecting more of what students' expected, within the remit of learning outcomes. This investigation demonstrates that, owing to current threats to the internationalised legal education system in Wales, there is a pressing need to appreciate and respond to the expectation-reality gap for all learners, via appropriate teaching and extra-curricular interventions. This article proposes a model that draws upon pedagogical theory and new empirical data to fully promote internationalisation and facilitate deeper, effective learning experiences for the benefit of all students. The results of which are transferrable to other Law Schools throughout the Commonwealth which have an international mix of learners.

INTRODUCTION

This action-based project advances existing research into the expectation-reality gap within UK legal education; expressly through exploring similarities and differences in these gaps

¹ For UK home student study see: K Dutton et al, 'Great Expectations: Managing Student Expectations and Enhancing Engagement with Undergraduate Study' (Higher Education Academy 2012) available online: <https://www.slideshare.net/HEA_Law/the-expectationreality-gap-and-undergraduate-law-student-experiences> accessed 6 March 2017.

when accounting for a student's country of origin. It adopts the same methodology as previous empirical studies on the subject.²

This information was collected via quantitative survey responses from first year LLB Law students between 2013 and 2017. Whilst international student representation fluctuated over this period, there was an average ratio of 73% UK to 27% international student representation from 26 different countries.³ The results evidence that the class had high expectations as to the number of group work activities they were going to take part in, as well as the number of presentations they were going to be asked to make. As the current LLB programme does not offer a means of incorporating more summative practical experiences, other than mooting, this invention implemented an extra-curricular *Legal World Series* project. *The Legal World Series* is a student led, multi-culturally themed, conference and social activities initiative, whereby several student regional coordinators were each given the task of planning a minimum two-hour 'continent themed' event. The aim of this initiative was to strengthen peer-to-peer learning experiences, as well as facilitate further opportunities to promote internationalisation.

Reasons for the Study

There are two reasons why this empirical investigation, and subsequent extra-curricular intervention, was conducted: firstly, so as to realise the benefits of having an integrated classroom, where international learners can share ideas with UK students, rather than sitting in culturally/nationality segregated groups. The underlying objective was to help promote internationalisation via peer-to-peer experiences.

The second reason is the context of today's Higher Education environment in Wales. Combined, Welsh Universities have 21.5% non-UK students directly contributing to their income (a figure which is 2.5% higher than the overall UK average).⁴ Amongst these numbers, Law is consistently acknowledged as one of the top ten subjects to study within the UK; with the subject often ranked the second most popular choice for school leavers (second only to medical sciences).⁵ Whilst the study of Law is often assumed to be jurisdiction specific; there

² *Ibid*, see also: CB Kandiko and M Mawer, 'Student Expectations and Perceptions of Higher Education' (Quality Assurance Agency 2013) available online:

<<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/study/learningteaching/kli/People/Research/DL/QAARReport.pdf>> accessed 6 March 2017; and C Dangerfield, 'Expectation and Experience: A View from the Students' (Salford Students' Union, HE Zone Committee, NUS, 2012).

³ Namely: Wales, England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Ireland, Cyprus, The Netherlands, Greece, Romania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, France, Spain, Italy, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Thailand, Greece, Romania, USA, Canada, Bahrain, India, Pakistan, Australia.

⁴ HESA, 'Higher Education Student Statistics: UK, 2016-17 – Where students come from and go to study' (HESA, 11 January 2018) available online at: <<https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/11-01-2018/sfr247-higher-education-student-statistics/location>>.

⁵ The Complete University Guide 'Top 10 Most Popular Courses in the UK' (2018) available online at: <<https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/courses/top-10-most-popular-courses-in-the-uk/>>.

are significant reasons why Wales should, and has, taken an internationalised approach to the delivery of legal education. All Law Schools in Wales offer a variety of electives, both at undergraduate and postgraduate level, beyond just the foundation subjects. Subjects such as international public and private Law; and strategic partnerships with leading EU Law Schools;⁶ are widening the appeal and reputation of Law Schools in Wales as centres of excellence. In doing so, they have attracted more international students. The delivery of such international specialisms in Wales is in no small part attributable to the assiduousness of non-UK lecturers teaching within Wales. In return, UK students benefit from an 'internationalised outlook' through opportunities to mix with a more diverse group of peers; a wider international mix of lecturers, teaching a vast array of specialisms and international subjects; greater opportunities to travel abroad as part of their degree, including via the *Erasmus Plus* exchange; as well as enhanced employability skills and career prospects post-graduation (with a greater awareness of the opportunities available for UK Law students both at home and overseas). However in the coming years, Wales' internationalised legal education is set to face significant challenges, including (but not limited to): threats to the current Qualifying Law Degree LLB programme (in a move towards the Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE) model, which does not place significant value on knowledge of European Union Law);⁷ the marketisation of Higher Education which ranks pass rates, retention and progression above other traditional University values (via Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) metrics); as well as the current 'hostile environment'⁸ for foreign nationals owing to the political climate of Brexit. Under such pressures, the benefits and value of an internationalised legal education to the future generation of Lawyers in Wales is under threat.⁹ It is therefore pertinent and of importance that Welsh and UK Law Schools refocus their attention on narrowing the gap between student expectations and the reality of studying on their courses, in order to ensure a positive student experience for both UK and international students.

PEDAGOGICAL UNDERPINNING

Internationalisation can be defined as, 'the process of integrating an international, intercultural and/or global dimension in the goals, functions (teaching, learning research, services)

⁶ Such as the joint French Law and English Law double degree programme offered by Bangor University and Université Toulouse 1 Capitole (France), which was awarded the Prix Universitaire Robertson-Horsington award by the Franco-British Lawyers Society. See further: <<https://fblls.eu/2017/05/01/fblls-awards-2017-prix-universitaire-robertson-horsington-to-universite-toulouse1-capitole/>>.

⁷ In the Solicitor Regulation Authority consultation, the 6 SQE Stage 1 assessments (identified as the 6 functioning legal knowledge assessments were: i) Principles of Professional Conduct, Public and Administrative law, and the Legal Systems of England and Wales; ii) Dispute Resolution in Contract or Tort; iii) Property Law and Practice; iv) Commercial and Corporate Law and Practice; v) Wills and the Administration of Estates and Trusts; and vi) Criminal Law and Practice. EU law does not appear to stand alone as a specific recognised area of knowledge.

⁸ See for example, 'The Observer view on Theresa May's hateful 'hostile environment' immigration policy' *The Guardian* 22 April 2018.

⁹ For a UK wide position, see J Guth and T Hervey, 'Threats to internationalised legal education in the twenty-first century UK' (2018) 53 *The Law Teacher* 1. For analysis see: C James and J Koo, 'The EU Law "Core" Module: Surviving the Perfect Storm of Brexit and the SQE' (2017) 52 *The Law Teacher* 68.

and delivery of Higher Education.¹⁰ The international movement of students can be attributed to the 'inability' of the indigenous education systems in most developing countries to satisfy growing demands for degrees.¹¹ This means that students are increasingly looking towards Western nations to secure places in Higher Education. By 2020 it is predicted by some that China and India will be unable to supply the 20 and 9 million University places respectively needed for their own student populations.¹² Figures from February 2009 show an 8% increase in demand in international students' desire to study at Western Universities, with the UK, at least prior to the Brexit Referendum result, often being amongst the first choices for students from most of these countries.¹³ Despite this increasing international student community, commentators have noted that, holistically, some Universities appear to have done little to account for the cultural differences of international students.¹⁴ Furthermore, previous studies have shown that failure to address these new challenges when they arise will result in a sub-optimum learning experience for students.¹⁵ This research responds to these concerns by highlighting differences in UK and international student expectations, and thereafter facilitating an opportunity for inclusivity, across nationalities and cultures.

The theoretical underpinning for these investigations largely stem from Biggs, and his principles for 'setting the stage for effective teaching.'¹⁶ More specifically his findings on teaching international students, where he discusses the challenges of a multi-cultural class, and how social-cultural adjustments can be a stressful problem for international students. In this regard, students from different cultures see 'questions differently.' For example, learners

¹⁰ See: J Knight, *Higher Education in Turmoil: The Changing World of Internationalization* (Sense Publishers, Rotterdam 2008), and for further analysis: J Knight, 'Five Myths About Internationalization' (International Higher Education, Boston College Centre for International Education Boston, 2011) pp. 14-15.

¹¹ S Page, G Rajkhowa and P Webb, 'Bridging the Gap: Expectation versus Reality for International MBA Students Studying in the United Kingdom' (Chester University Business School 2013).

¹² A O'Brien et al, 'A study into the factors influencing the choice-making process of Indian students when selecting an international university for graduate studies using grounded theory' (University of Delft, Holland 2007) available online at:

<<https://chesterrep.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10034/37772/o'brien,+webb,+page+&+proctor+-+conference+paper+july+2007.pdf;jsessionid=F29C099DDF53C552A36A0DCA2A7EA408?sequence=11>>

Accessed 6th June 2019.

¹³ See: S Clear and M Parker, 'Home v International Law Student Expectations' (Association of Law Teachers' Annual Conference 2017) available online at: <<http://www.lawteacher.ac.uk/docs/2017/Stephen-Clear-ALT-Slides-Complete.pdf>> accessed 6th June 2019; and H Spencer-Oatey and D Dauber, 'Internationalisation and the development of 'global graduates': hearing the students' voices' (GlobalPAD Warwick, 2017) available

online at: <<http://www.warwick.ac.uk/globalpadintercultural>> accessed 6th June 2019. For empirical analysis of the potential impact of Brexit on legal education (using Wales as a case study) please see: S Clear, D Cahill and G Clifford, 'Mapping the Effects of Brexit on Legal Education in Wales' (19th November 2018) The Law Teacher journal available online at:

<<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03069400.2018.1537171>> accessed 6th June 2019.

¹⁴ See: R D Williams and A Lee (eds) *Internationalizing Higher Education* (Sense Publishers 2015).

¹⁵ P Ramburuth and R Mladenovic, 'Exploring the relationship between students' orientations to learning, the structure of students' learning outcomes and subsequent academic performance' (2004) 13 *Accounting Education* 507.

¹⁶ J Biggs, *Teaching for Quality Learning at University* (2nd edn Open University Press 2004) Ch 7.

from Asia appear to be more inclined to favour descriptive 'rote-learning', which does not lend itself well to analytical problem-solving. In striving to achieve best practice, Biggs comments that lecturers report difficulties in teaching international students. These include not only language barriers, but also learning-related problems that are seen as 'cultural' in origin, such as reliance on rote-learning, passivity and teacher dependence.

The authors of this research were aware of similar challenges specific to legal education. For example, amongst the French native learners, particularly when structuring problem question responses. These students found it challenging to follow an Issue, Rule/Law, Application, Conclusion (IRAC/ILAC) structure, namely because they had been taught in their own jurisdiction to follow a Rule, Issue, Application (RIA) method. They claimed to be taught to never arrive at a conclusion as to the legal possibilities, as doing so would be to portray 'arrogance', as if they were trying to fulfil the role of the judge. These complexities can also be further exasperated for international learners when accounting for the specialism of legal study. An international learner is not only posed with the challenges of learning English, but moreover learning Legal English with its complex terminology that many native lay people may not be familiar with.

However, as Biggs recognises, these perceptions of international learners are, like most stereotypes, distortions of the reality. Rather, international students, much like UK students, have some similar learning experiences. That is not to say that misunderstandings will not arise when lecturers and learners come from different cultural backgrounds, but rather that an inclusive view of teaching will minimise them.¹⁷ In order to facilitate this, the *Legal World Series* project was viewed as a 'stepping-stone' towards embracing cultural differences within the classroom, and empowering students to be part of an inclusive learning community.

The Theoretical Underpinning of the Student Expectation v Reality Study

The pedagogical underpinning for the empirical surveys stems from previous research into the experiences of UK Law students.¹⁸ These projects were based upon the premise that expectation-reality gaps have particular pertinence for Law students (Sam Banks, 1999). They also identified that expectation was a key influence upon student experience and engagement (Biggs 1999). The reality of studying Law should largely mirror what students were expecting at the start of the course as if this gap is 'closed' then there could be potential

¹⁷ See further: J Biggs, *Teaching for Quality Learning at University* (2nd edn Open University Press 2004) p 120.

¹⁸ K Dutton et al, 'Great Expectations: Managing Student Expectations and Enhancing Engagement with Undergraduate Study' (Higher Education Academy 2012) available online: <https://www.slideshare.net/HEA_Law/the-expectationreality-gap-and-undergraduate-law-student-experiences> accessed 6 March 2017.

benefits to student performance and retention.¹⁹ Other benefits include gaining a holistic understanding of what students expect from studying at undergraduate level (Pawson and Tilley 1997). Owing to reduced numbers of non-UK students within Dutton's study, their investigations were not able to explore similarities and differences in UK and international students' expectations. Such previous research limitations form the foundation for this new study.

Nonetheless, in embarking on these investigations, it was pertinent to appreciate that students are not a homogenous group, and have varying expectations, which do not necessarily reflecting what they need or want.²⁰ As Dutton put it:

...in a system that puts students at its centre, meeting their expectations becomes the key to success...but simply responding poses dangers of commodification or reduction in quality; we must understand and manage expectation to enhance both experience and engagement.²¹

In translating such findings to our study, this project is not just about recognising the expectation-reality gap, but also about managing those expectations in a realistic fashion.

The Theoretical Underpinning of Peer-to-Peer Learning Exercises

The *Legal World Series* is a student-led initiative whereby learners share their existing knowledge and engage in peer-to-peer learning. Throughout HEA reports the message that students learn best from practical and interactive experiences is repeated.²² Peer-to-peer learning is where there is an open sharing of knowledge, experiences and practices amongst learners to support one another's understanding and development.

Two of the most prevalent UK theorists to conceptualise the benefits of peer-to-peer learning are Capstick and Fleming.²³ Their research group has explored the benefits to a learner's

¹⁹ This suggestion is also supported by P Wakeling and G Hampden-Thompson, 'Transition to Higher Degrees Across the UK: An Analysis of National, Institutional and Individual Differences' (Higher Education Academy Research Series, April 2013).

²⁰ C Dangerfield, 'Expectation and Experience: A View from the Students' (Salford Students' Union, HE Zone Committee, NUS, 2012).

²¹ K Dutton et al, 'Great Expectations: Managing Student Expectations and Enhancing Engagement with Undergraduate Study' (Higher Education Academy 2012) available online: <https://www.slideshare.net/HEA_Law/the-expectationreality-gap-and-undergraduate-law-student-experiences> accessed 6 March 2017.

²² V Gunn, A Fisk, 'Considering teaching excellence in higher education: 2007-2013. A literature review since the CHERI report 2007' (Higher Education Academy Research Series, 2013).

²³ S Capstick, 'Benefits and Shortcomings of Peer Assisted Learning (PAL in Higher Education: an appraisal by students' (Bournemouth University, 2004) S Capstick, H Flemming and J Hurne, 'Implementing Peer Assisted Learning in Higher Education: The experience of a new university and a model for the achievement of a mainstream programme' (Bournemouth University, 2004).

personal development when presented with plentiful peer-to-peer activities. The importance of such research is summarised by Wirth and Perkins:²⁴

...we test our learning through action...That is our brain gets feedback about our thinking when we put ideas into action...this is also a good reason...for learning in groups; learning in social environments results in richer neural networks.²⁵

If active teamwork can lead to richer neural networks, teamwork via the *Legal World Series* project should assist students in deepening their understanding of fundamental legal concepts, and thereafter assist them in attaining higher marks. As students are pedagogically believed to learn best when they are performing tasks together, the *Legal World Series* project was designed with this purpose in mind i.e. to help promote an atmosphere of open sharing of knowledge, where facilitators can share delight in learners' peer-to-peer exchange of ideas and success.

EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION METHODOLOGY

So as to understand the first years' expectations, surveys were carried out in 2013-14 and then repeated again in 2016-17. In order to identify any potential changes in these expectations over the course of the academic year, three questionnaires were distributed. The first captured the responses at the start of the academic year, in October. The second was distributed at the start of semester two, in January, and the final questionnaire was handed out at the end of the academic year, in March, just before the start of the examination period. So as to achieve as greater consistency as possible, these questionnaires were distributed to the same class, namely Legal Skills.²⁶ The questionnaire asked students to identify their 'country of origin' and 'native language', so as to allow for comparative analysis within our findings. Students were asked about expectations as to contact time; independent reading; assignments; group projects and presentations. Furthermore, at the start of the academic year, the questionnaire asked students to summarise, in one sentence, their expectations of studying on the LLB programme. In later versions (in January and March) this final question was replaced so as to enquire as to the students' preferences as to group work over independent study.

EXPECTATION SURVEY RESULTS

For the purposes of this article, the findings on expectations about presentations and group work and has been focussed upon.

²⁴ KR Wirth and D Perkins, 'Learning to Learn' (Manchester College, University of North Dakota, 2012).

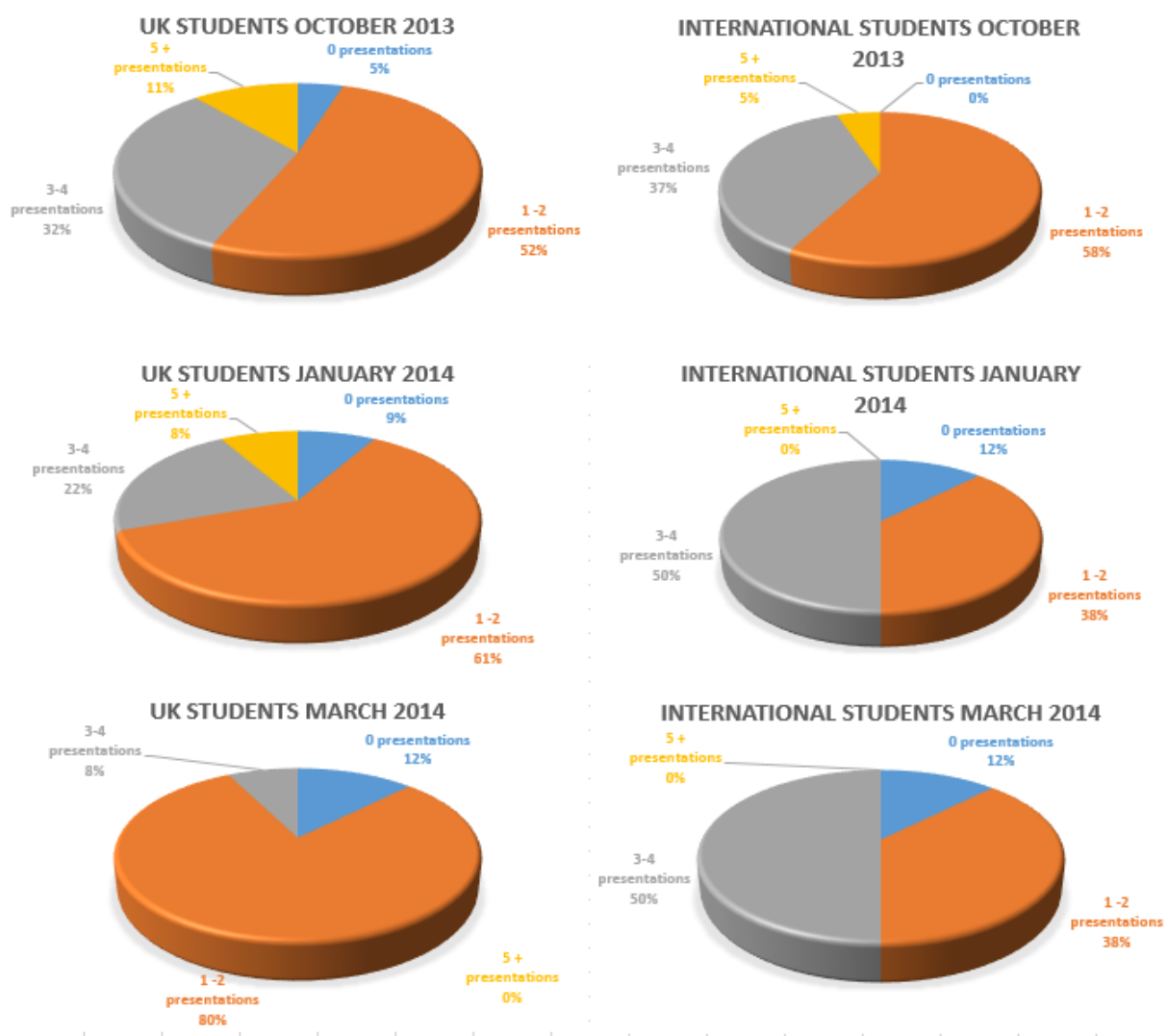
²⁵ KR Wirth and D Perkins, 'Learning to Learn' (Manchester College, University of North Dakota, 2012).

²⁶ It is noted that the number of respondents within each of the three questionnaire period fluctuates. This is owing to early withdrawals from the course, non-attendance on the day, and some one semester only visiting Erasmus and Experiences students leaving Bangor after January.

Student Expectations v Reality: Number of Presentations per Year

In reality, at Bangor Law School, our first year students make one or two presentations per year. Like many Law Schools, we follow the traditional methods of assessment of essay writing, combined with an exam paper for the majority of our modules.

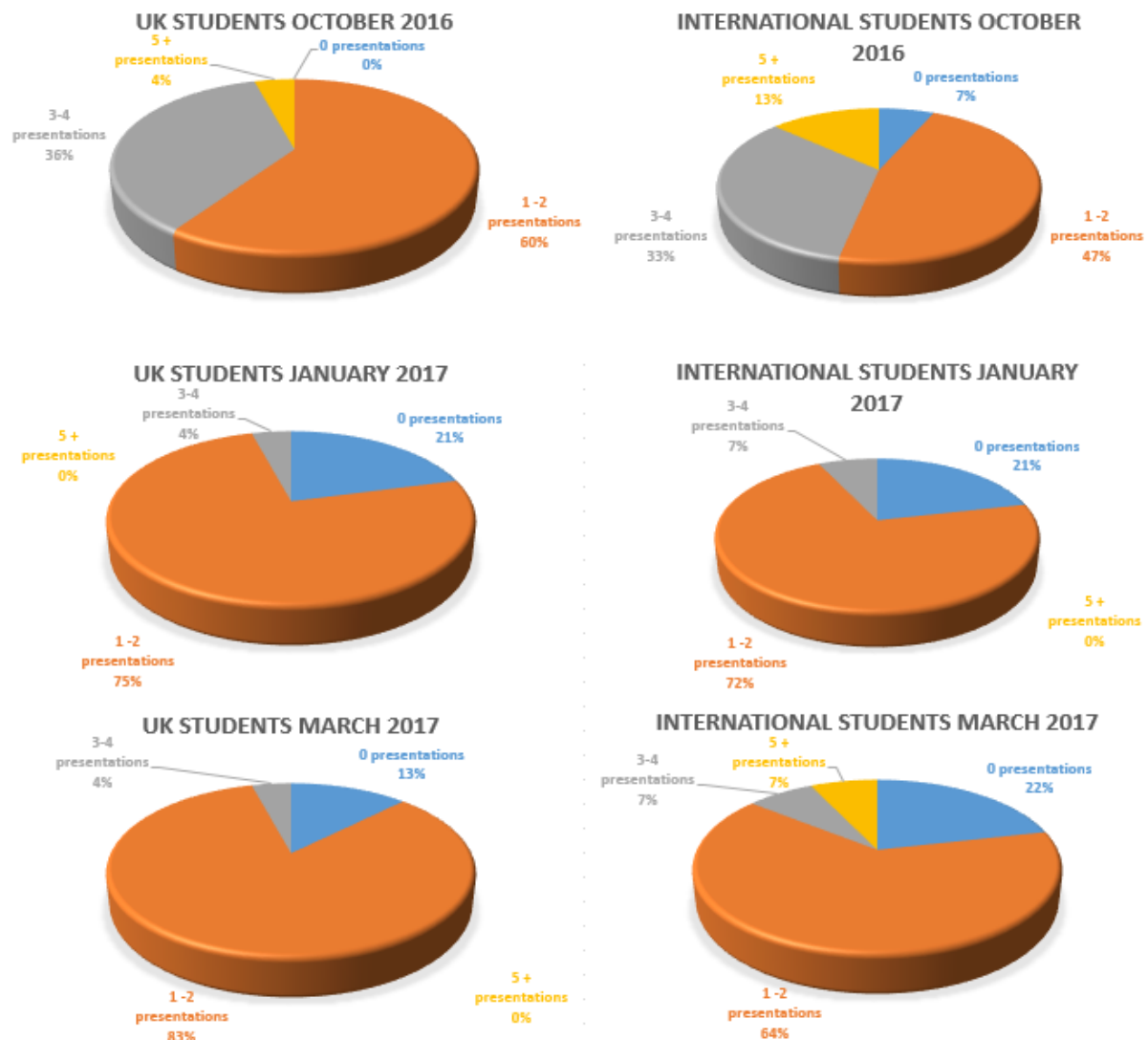
The charts below set out the changing expectations over the course of two academic sessions, and demonstrate that we do not meet the expectations held by many students with regard to the requirement to deliver presentations. The first set of charts show our 2013-14 findings, shown below.



In our initial study, the trend of expectations held by our UK students is downwards. At the start of the year, 43% expected to make three or presentations, compared to the 8% in this category by the end of the survey. The expectations held by our UK students fell in line with reality.

Conversely, the expectations held by our international students rose during the academic year. At the start of the year, 42% of the cohort held a higher expectation than the reality, with a steady 50% of the cohort expecting to deliver three or more presentations from January onwards.

At this stage, we were able to conclude that we were not meeting expectations with regard to the delivery of presentations. The study was repeated in 2016-17, the results are set out below.



In our more recent study, the expectations held by our UK students dropped again in order to fall in line with reality. At the start of the academic year, 40% of our UK students expected to make three or more presentations, this fell to just 4% by the start of semester one. The expectations held by our international students began in a consistent manner to the previous study, 46% of this group expected to make three or more presentations. However, in this study, those expectations fell in line with reality as the year progressed.

Once again, consistent with the findings of 2013-14, we were able to conclude that student expectations of the programme with regard to the delivery of presentations were not met.

These figures can be usefully supplemented by responses from our cohort when asked to summarise, in one sentence, their expectations of studying on the LLB programme. Below are a selection of representative comments taken from both surveys:

UK Students:

‘Expect to learn more analytical skills, as well as the ability to speak clearly and concisely.’

‘An active course, going beyond the curriculum, to enhance my chances of qualifying as a barrister. ’

‘To gain a broad understanding of the skills needed to progress into the law profession.’

‘To learn how to enhance my debating and writing skills.’

International Students:

‘Be able to understand and have a confident speech in all courses I choose.’

‘I would like to improve my spoken skills and my technical knowledge in law.’

‘Learn and practice law, in order to use real life practice in the future.’

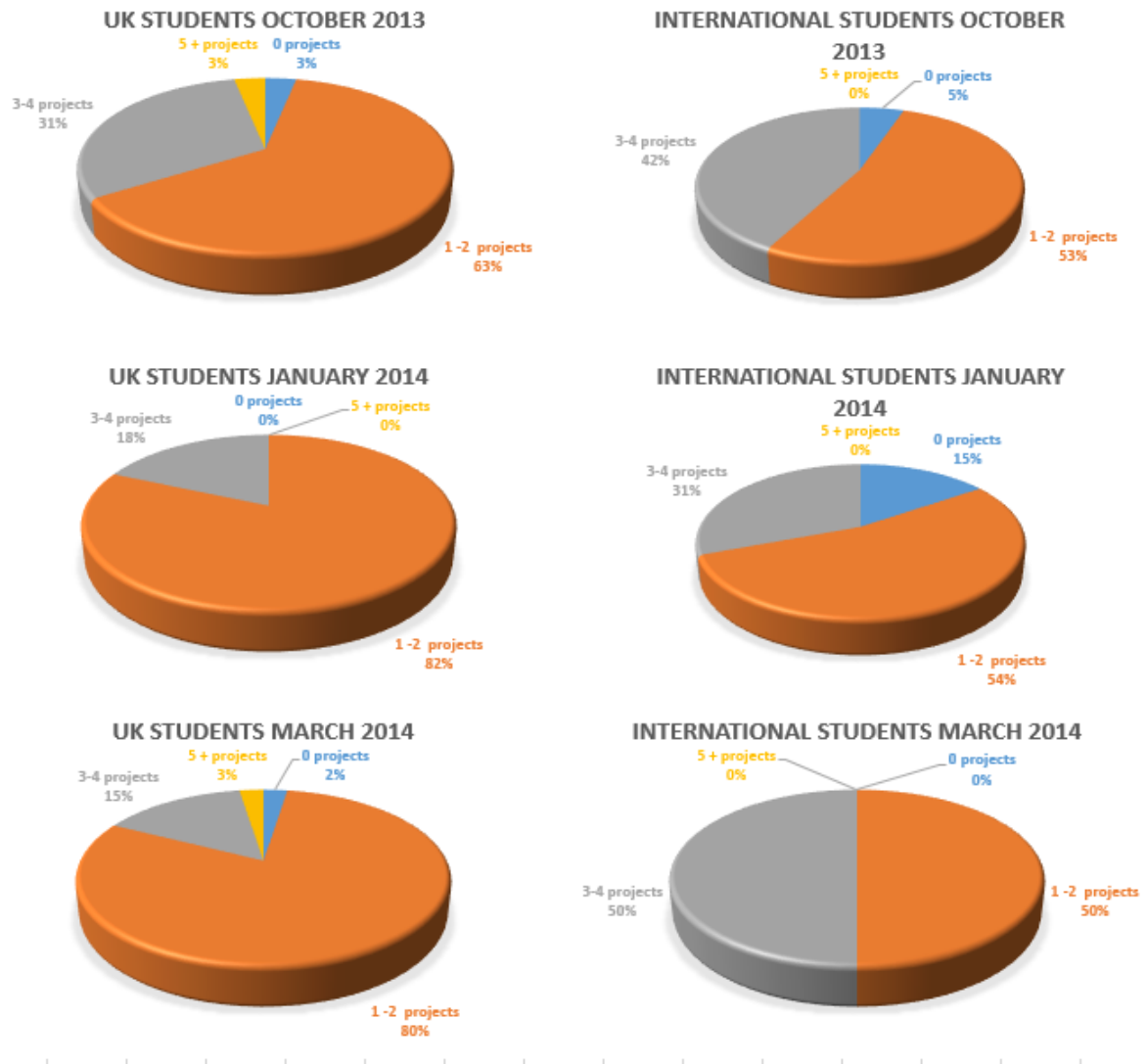
‘Learn about the law in other countries, especially the UK and EU Law’

It is evident that the vast majority of our students had higher expectations than the reality of one to two presentations per year when then first started to study Law. This study has also identified that international students in particular have higher expectations with regard to the number of presentations they expect to make, and often for specific language issues.

Student Expectations v Reality: Number of Group Projects per Year

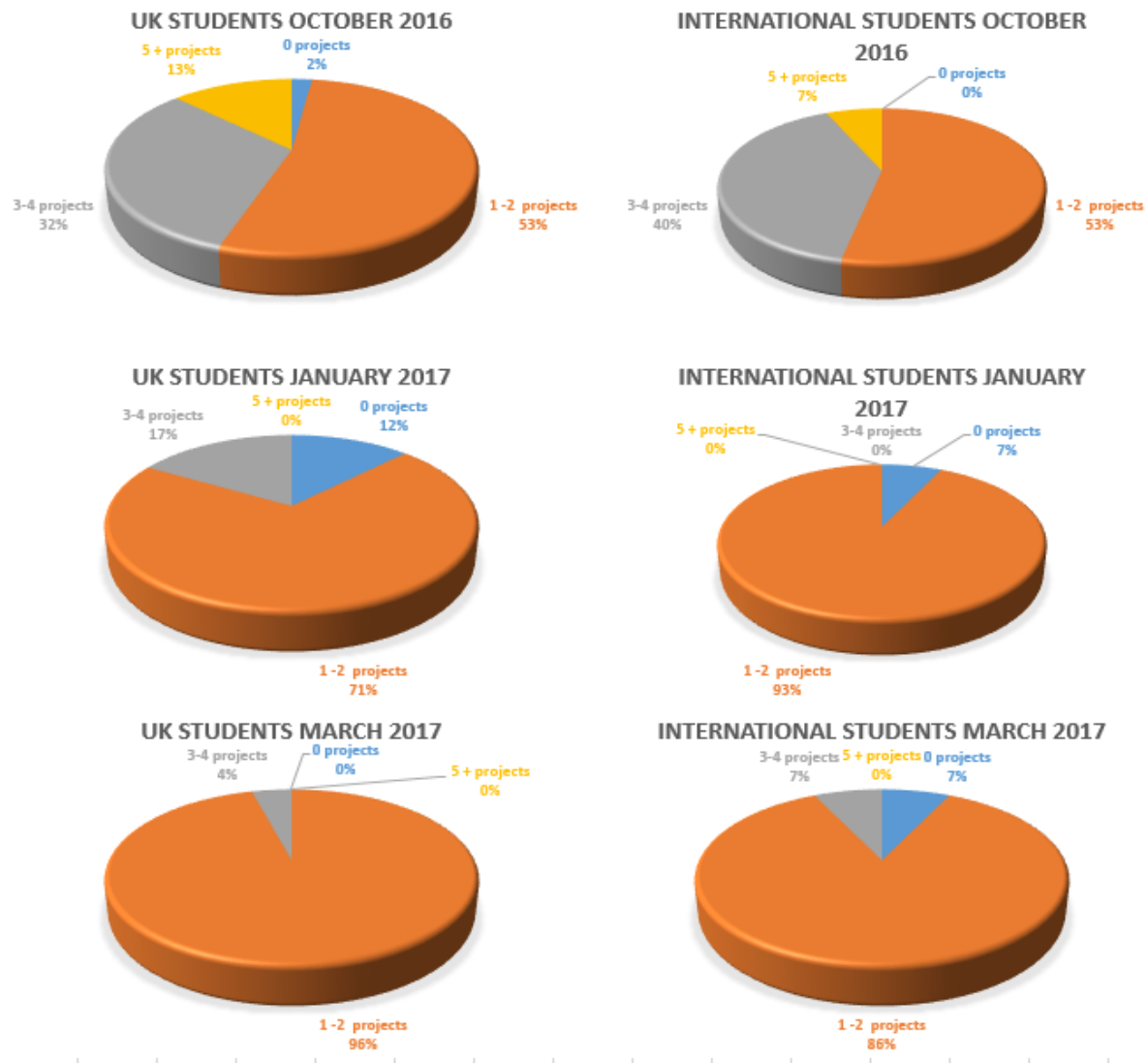
The following charts set out our data from 2013-14 and 2016-17 with regard to expectations held about group project activities on the programme. The reality is that students would

engage with one to two group projects per year. Again, the data demonstrates that we do not meet the expectations of many students. The first set of charts show our 2013-14 findings.



As can be seen above, the expectations of the UK students largely fell in line with the reality of one to two projects per year. On the whole, a larger proportion of our international students expected to be engaged with more group projects than the reality of the course, with the most striking result of 50% holding this higher expectation in March 2014, compared to just 18% of our UK students.

The results from 2016-17 are set out below.



When looking at UK students, 45% start out with higher expectations than the reality of one to two presentations per year, this fell to just 4% by the end of the year. For international students, 47% started with a higher expectation than reality, and this fell to just 7% by the end of the year.

Whilst there are some fluctuations across the two sets of results, it is possible to conclude that students arrive with higher expectations about group work activities than we deliver in the programme.

As identified by Burns, engaging students with group work can aid internationalisation by fostering a sense of social belonging for all students, and international students in particular.²⁷ The need for community is set out by Pickford: 'An excellent learning community requires a focus on social integration, encouraging students to feel a sense of belonging and to learn with and from others through teaching approaches that involve regular interaction,

²⁷ V Burns, 'Developing skills for successful international groupwork' The Higher Education Academy <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/birmingham_burns_connections_final_report.pdf>.

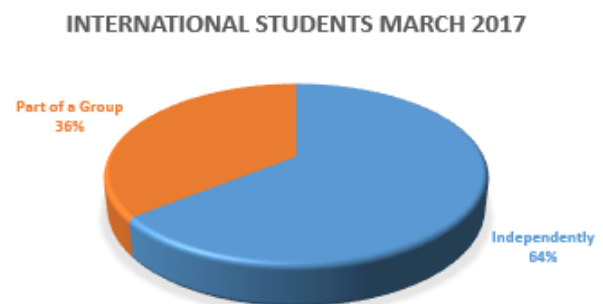
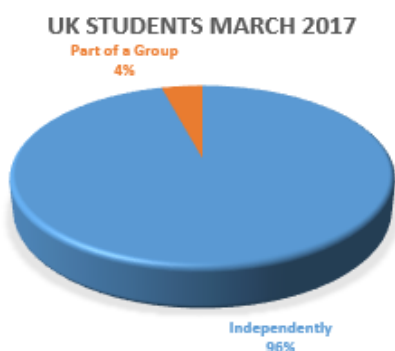
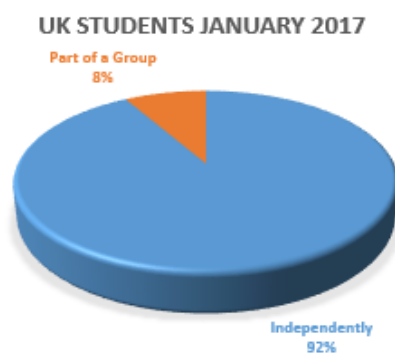
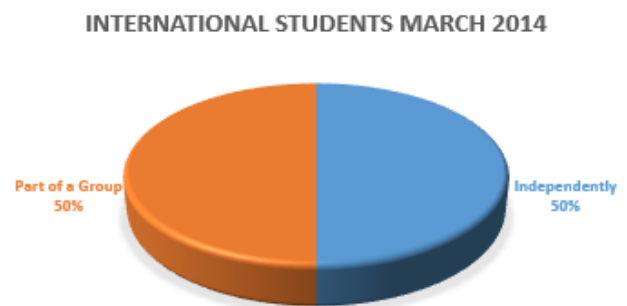
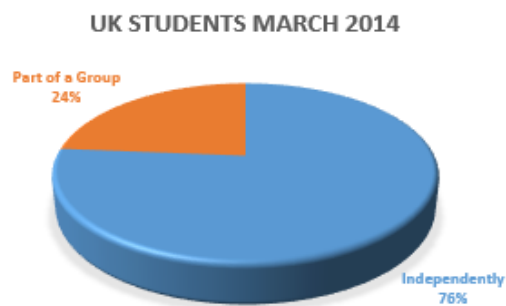
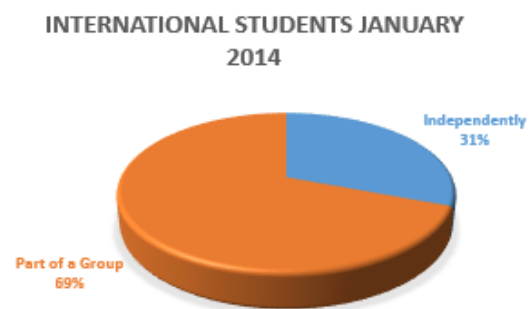
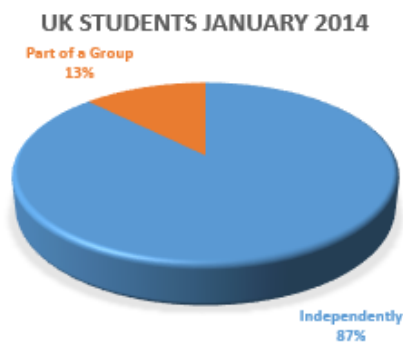
integrated feedback, and opportunities for students to develop as collaborative learners.’²⁸ It is perhaps the desire to gain this sense of belonging that increases the expectations held by international students with regard to the provision of group tasks. Further pedagogical benefits of teamwork have been discussed earlier in this article.

Student Preferences: Independent v Group Work

The culmination of this study asked students whether they preferred to work independently or as part of a group, this question was posed in January and March in both studies. It is notable that overall a larger proportion of International students prefer to work as part of a group compared to their UK peers.

This was particularly striking in January 2014, where 69% of our international students stated that they preferred to work as part of a group. However, this trend can be observed across the results from both studies, as shown in the charts for 2013-14 and 2016-17 below.

²⁸ R Pickford, ‘A Blueprint for Teaching Excellence’ *Journal of Perspectives in Applied Academic Practice* 2018, 100.



Many students expect that there will be some practical element to their Law degree. The findings show that many students have un-met expectations with regard to the requirement of making presentations and engage in group work activities. It is also notable that international students expect the LLB programme to enable them to develop their spoken English.

Pichinnaz and Hirte comment, 'Legal education should give the students the keys to know how to acquire new legal knowledge in the future. Therefore, law schools should enable

lifelong learning by giving the tools to get to that aim.²⁹ By delivering a presentation and working as part of a team, students will improve their public speaking skills by delivering a succinct and clear legal argument. Confidence and a sense of belonging can also be increased by completing this exercise. The ability to communicate in this manner will improve chances of employability in the legal profession and beyond.³⁰

The process of preparing a well-structured and robust argument requires thorough research, and so students' ability to gather relevant information is improved. Given the limited time students may have to present their argument they have to ensure that only pertinent points are selected. In order to carry out this research process the students must initially engage in problem solving so as to deduce the strengths and weaknesses on either side of the argument.³¹ Finally, and often overlooked, such a task can enhance the collegiate spirit of the cohort and promote healthy competition amongst students.

Spitzmiller suggests, '...the greatest obstacle non-native-English speakers face is mastering the technical jargon and complex English structure typical of legal communications.'³² The provision of presentation skills within the LLB programme gives students the opportunity to practice their oral presentation skills, in addition to the use of legal terminology. Raimo comments, '...international students' experiences of UK universities begin well before they join us. Unlike many of our home students, international students rarely get the chance to visit our campuses before they make their possibly-life-changing investment in our universities.'³³ For this reason, it is possible to suggest at this stage that the provision of presentation skills can help to meet a very important expectation held by international students.

One of the findings to come from Dutton's research was that students had low recognition of the 'traditional skills' necessary for success and instead showed high priority to practical skills. The skills developed through delivering a presentation can meet many of the pedagogical benefits associated to the 'traditional skills' and understanding the theory of Law.

With regard to expectations and reality more generally, it is suggested that greater clarity could be achieved by setting firm boundaries³⁴ as to the reality of studying Law very early on

²⁹ Pascal Pichonnaz and Heribert Hirte, 'Where is law taught? Who teaches law? An exchange of experiences of the institutions in which law is being taught and of the persons who teach law' *European Journal of Education*, Volume 3, Issue 1, 2006.

³⁰ See, *Setting Standards: The future of legal services education and training regulation in England and Wales* (Legal Education and Training Review, 2013).

³¹ See generally David Pope and Dan Hill, *Mooting and Advocacy Skills* (2nd edn, Sweet and Maxwell 2011) 1.2 - 1.13.

³² Rebecca Spitzmiller, 'The Phillip C Jessup International Law Moot Court Competition: A tool for teaching / learning legal English' *European Journal of Legal Education*, Volume 3, Issue 2, 2006.

³³ Vincenzo Raimo, 'Rising student expectations? University international offices now all about it' *The Guardian Higher Education Blog* 2013.

³⁴ See for example, Jackie Lane, 'Do we deliver on Law student expectations? If not, how can we work to achieve this?' In: 45th Annual Conference of the Association of Law Teachers, Legal Education: Making a Difference, Clare College, Cambridge, 2010: 'To ensure that students know what to expect when they begin

in the course. This research also demonstrates that this may need to be repeated and reinforced throughout the academic year due to the fluctuations observed in the results discussed above. The study has demonstrated the need to respond to expectations with regard to group work activities and the development of presentation skills. Furthermore, this study has demonstrated the reasoning behind the expectations held by both UK and international students by assessing student comments. It is suggested that many expectations can be met by making small changes to the structure of some modules, the requirement of non-assessed oral presentations, moots or debates within tutorial sessions for example. However, this article proposes that changes can also be made by means of extra-curricular initiatives, which contribute towards the wider learning environment within a Law School. Implementing such changes via non-summative means, which only carry HEAR credit, also facilitates greater flexibility to give students more of what they wanted and expected as part of being a student at a Law School in Wales.

THE LEGAL WORLD PROJECT

Responding to these high student expectations, as part of summatively assessed work, was somewhat restricted by qualifying law degree requirements, and how the programmes had been institutionally validated for both UK and overseas professional regulatory bodies' recognition. Instead, and in recognition of the internationalisation objective of this model, an optional extra-curricular intervention was introduced, the *Legal World Series*. Across the *Series* a total of seven events were delivered by seven student coordinators, between January and May each year.³⁵ Students were invited to apply for each of the coordinator positions by submitting their Curriculum Vitae and a covering letter. A briefing session was held for those students who were interested in applying, where it was explained that the coordinators would be expected to work as part of a team in delivering a minimum two hour conference and social programme that would promote internationalisation, inclusivity and cultural understanding. The attendees were advised that to be a student coordinator for a specific region they did not have to originate from a specific country within that area; they just had to have an interest in promoting awareness as to its customs. The group were also advised that what featured within the programme was entirely up to them, with the only condition being that the papers had to have a legal theme. After this meeting, seven student coordinators were appointed. They were reminded that whilst they were not securing

their studies, a plan should be developed to make certain that students are given the right information. A partnership statement or learning agreement should be made available to students as early as possible, and given a high profile - possibly at the point of enrolment or even earlier, at interview or in the prospectus. This should set firm boundaries.'

³⁵ These regions were divided as follows: Africa, United Kingdom, Europe, the Middle East, the Americas and Canada, Australia and the Oceania, and Asia.

academic credit for their role, they were able to gain Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) recognition for their contributions and commitment.

The concept behind this project was to be entirely 'student-led'. So as to appreciate the benefits recognised by Healey, Flint and Harrington, namely that seeing students as partners within the learning environment can lead to richer learning processes and engagement.³⁶ Such an approach to teaching has led to the HEA producing a *Framework for Partnership in Learning and Teaching* in July 2014. This report identifies empowerment, inclusivity, community and responsibility as key partnership principles and values for effective learning experiences.³⁷ This project evidences all of these values by putting students at the centre of the experience, through coordinating their own events, as well as empowering learners to present their own papers. The group were advised that both of the authors would be the only staff attending the events, so as to keep the *Series* student focused, and so as not make presenters feel unduly nervous. Surprisingly this was unwelcome by some of the more confident student coordinators, with some wanting the entire faculty to attend. It was therefore later agreed that the individual coordinators were responsible for liaising with their presenters and inviting staff members if they wished them to be there. As the project was entirely voluntary, the *Series* also comprised of themed social events, so as to boost attendance and promote networking and internationalisation. From empirical investigations into international student engagement, it was known that some members of Asian communities were deterred from attending events that were described as 'social activities'.³⁸ We therefore described such activities as opportunities to network and enhance interpersonal skills.

5.1 Reviewing the *Legal World Series* Project

The project was implemented in semester one of the 2014/15 academic year, in order to directly respond to the high student expectations evidenced within our previous year's survey. Across the *Series* a total of 34 students from 21 different countries presented a variety of topics. Furthermore, in collaboration with 10 Student Union clubs and societies, such as Street Law, the Cooking Society, BU Dance, and the Afro-Caribbean Society, seven themed social events were delivered, including 'A Taste of Africa', Chinese tea, Middle Eastern films, salsa dancing classes, and afternoon British tea. Combined, students delivered 15.5 hours of extra-curricular activities in 2014. Over the course of the *Series* a total of 138 students attended from 25 different countries.

In order to assess the success of these initiatives, event feedback forms were distributed at the end of each event. These invited students to comment upon their reasons for attending,

³⁶ M Healey, A Flint, K Harrington, 'Engagement through partnership: students as partners in learning and teaching in higher education' (Higher Education Academy Report 2014)

³⁷ Higher Education Academy, 'Framework for partnership in learning and teaching in higher education' (HEA July 2014)

³⁸ M Vittori, 'Share and Inspire: Engaging International Students' (Bangor University, 2013).

what they had learnt, what they felt went well; and what could be improved upon. These questions were asked so as to gauge the effectiveness of the peer learning exercises, and assess the extent to which students were achieving internationalisation in their outlook.

Overall the feedback was complimentary as to the success of the project, with several written comments referring to a desire to organise a longer programme and include more speakers. The Africa event had the largest number of attendees (but also had the most participants originating from the region in the audience). From the feedback it is clear that peer-to-peer support was strongest amongst the African students. The Europe and Asia events had the largest mix of attendees from the most diverse number of countries. In both of these sessions, where the possibility to promote internationalisation was most opportune, written comments most frequently referred to meeting new people and learning about different cultures as a benefit of the events. The Middle East and Australia events had the fewest attendees, and lowest mix of nationalities. The majority of attendees said they enjoyed the activities, with most of the non-EU students saying that felt empowered to present at future events. 33% of those presenting said it was their first time doing so. 94% said they had learnt something new by attending. 58% of attendees said they met someone new as a result of attending an event. Furthermore, 98% said they wanted more or similar initiatives to run in subsequent years. Such positive feedback is testament that this approach of responding to student expectations is fruitful across both UK and international learners.

In addition, several culture specific observations can be made. Firstly, from the reasons for attending the event, 'support for a friend who was presenting' was most commonly cited at the Africa event, in addition 87% of African respondents across the programme said they attended to support a colleague. The written comments from African students at the Africa event were very complimentary as to their peers' performances within their presentations. A colligate learning environment, and support for each other in working together as a group to deliver on a joint task, was strongest amongst the African students. This finding was particularly prevalent amongst the Sudanese students as to the quality of the Sudanese speaker's presentation. By contrast European students, throughout the course of the programme, were critical of their peers' performances, and frequently referred to how the sessions could have been improved. By contrast to the Africa event, the feedback from the Europe session suggests a higher degree of competitiveness and criticism of each other when working as a group.

Facilitators' Observations of the *Legal World Series* Project

From a facilitators' perspective several observations can be made as to the success of these initiatives. Firstly students were innovative and creative in utilising a variety of visual aids throughout their presentations, such as interactive maps, videos and sound bites. However in the future there may be a need to vet such material, so as to avoid causing offence, or cultural controversy. For example, within one of the Middle East presentations, a heated debate was ignited by discussions in relation to religious texts and Kurdistan. Whilst these

discussions were academically grounded, there may be a need to revisit this. There may also be a need to put together guidelines as to the images that can be used. Some feedback referred to a need to be more sensitive when showing images and videos of genocide or a murder scene in Romania. Another respondent referred to the need for censorship when including American slang.

In terms of the future, from a quality assurance perspective, the facilitators feel the benefits of these initiatives could be more greatly appreciated by aligning student papers with course content, so as to advance some of the discussions. For example, at the UK event some of the presentations about devolution in Scotland and Wales were oversimplified. It is however noted that restricting presentations in this fashion may affect engagement or participation, and thus inhibit some of the internationalisation aims of the project.

Other observations pertain to the group dynamic amongst the student coordinators. On the whole, such was one of support and teamwork. The majority of the students attended each other's sessions and actively contributed towards group discussions. Interestingly, the two student coordinators who did not attend other coordinator's sessions also had the fewest number of attendees at their events. Both of these coordinators also gave themselves speaking sessions. This indicates that the publicity and marketing initiatives used by the majority of the group worked in securing a high turnout (unsurprisingly from each of their respective regions). Equally, it was evident that learners were only willing to reciprocate teamwork when they felt the individual student coordinator responsible for an event was a team player, or had helped them in the delivery of their event. Those who did not work as part of the team isolated themselves and, consequently, had the fewest number of attendees.

Finally, several of the student coordinators asked to bring in guest speakers. These requests were denied as the project needed to remain student-led, and distinguishable from the Law School's Guest Lecture programme. It was also felt that having guest practitioners in the room whilst students were presenting might deter some groups from fully participating. This is saving one exception, that being part of the Americas event where USA Attorney Levin, (Snoop Dogg's lawyer) was permitted to deliver a guest paper via Skype as part of the event's social programme, after the student presentations (so as to increase student attendance). Nevertheless, the coordinators' desire to invite guest speakers as part of their programme is interesting, suggesting that in order for the Law School to increase attendance at guest lectures, students should be involved in the planning and coordinating such events, as partners and stakeholders.³⁹

³⁹ Such is consistent with the thoughts of M Healey, A Flint, K Harrington, 'Engagement through partnership: students as partners in learning and teaching in higher education' (Higher Education Academy Report 2014), in relation to seeing students as partners in their learning journey; and E Mowlam, 'Supporting Student Law Societies and Extra-Curricular Activities and Students' in C Ashford and J Guth, *The Legal Academic's Handbook* (Palgrave, 2016) p118, in relation to student projects and societies being key to achieving collegiate harmony amongst all the Law School's stakeholders.

6. Concluding Thought: How to Addressing Internationalisation via Student Expectations

Comparing the empirical investigations in 2013/14 to 2016/17 shows that expectations do not remain static, and that repeated studies are required in order to keep track of changing expectations. Nonetheless, the quantitative questionnaire method remains an effective methodology for facilitators to understand students' expectations as to the delivery of the LLB programme, and thereafter either attempt to meet such expectations, or narrow the expectation-reality gap, as far as it is possible to do so. What is interesting is that different trends appear in different cohorts, and therefore it is not possible for us to generalise the expectations of all UK and international students. Therefore, it is imperative to ensure that there are a range of assessment methods, across the course, in addition to the provision of student-led group work activities, including extra-curricular projects.

So as to assess the impact of the group work initiatives, and the wider perceptions of peer-to-peer learning activities, the later versions of the expectation-reality survey sought to investigate any potential changes in student opinions. The January 2014 survey asked whether students favoured working as part of a team or independently. Prior to the introduction of the *Legal World Series* project, international students significantly favoured group work. By contrast, the majority of home students favoured working independently. These findings were replicated in both January and March 2014, and again in January and March 2017. It should be noted, that, post this intervention, the demand for group work projects, and presentation opportunities, has remained so strong that UK and international students have voluntarily elected to continue with the *Legal World Series* project via the Student Law Society, entirely student-led and without any staff intervention or oversight. Such is further evidence that the aims and objectives of this model, expressly to achieve student-led internationalisation, have been somewhat achieved.

In assessing the success of this model, while there are differing opinions amongst students as to whether they prefer working as part of a team or independently, it is clear that there is a demand for colligate teamwork events such as the *Legal World Series*, with 68% of the surveys across all seven events favouring the benefits of running the initiative. In reflecting upon the findings of the surveys, whilst not everyone wanted to engage in a group work activity, with some instead preferring to work independently, most students did nonetheless expect group work or presentations to feature as part of their LLB study, so as to appreciate the key skills development and benefits explored within this article.

For those that did attend the *Series*, the students evidently enjoyed the events and wanted more. In terms of assessing whether internationalisation was achieved within the Law School, students felt they had learnt more about different cultures, and met new people. This method of utilising pedagogy alongside empirical investigation to improve internationalisation within the lecture hall appears to have been a success, and is an approach that other Commonwealth Law Schools with an international mix of learners could use.

However, perhaps the greatest reward, from the facilitators' perspective, is witnessing the classroom dynamic change after these events. The majority of the student coordinators, a mixed group of nationalities, could be seen on campus revising together around exam time. Furthermore, classroom discussions amongst the cohort are now livelier and evidence greater confidence, with less cultural segregation as to where students are sitting in the lecture hall. Within module tutorials and workshops, international students compare jurisdictional insights as to the similarities and differences between the legal position in England and Wales and other systems. Whilst it is not possible to solely attribute this project to these benefits, it is evident that internationalisation is, at least at a *prima-facie* level, more prevalent post the *Legal World Series* action-based group work and presentation skills project than before 2014.